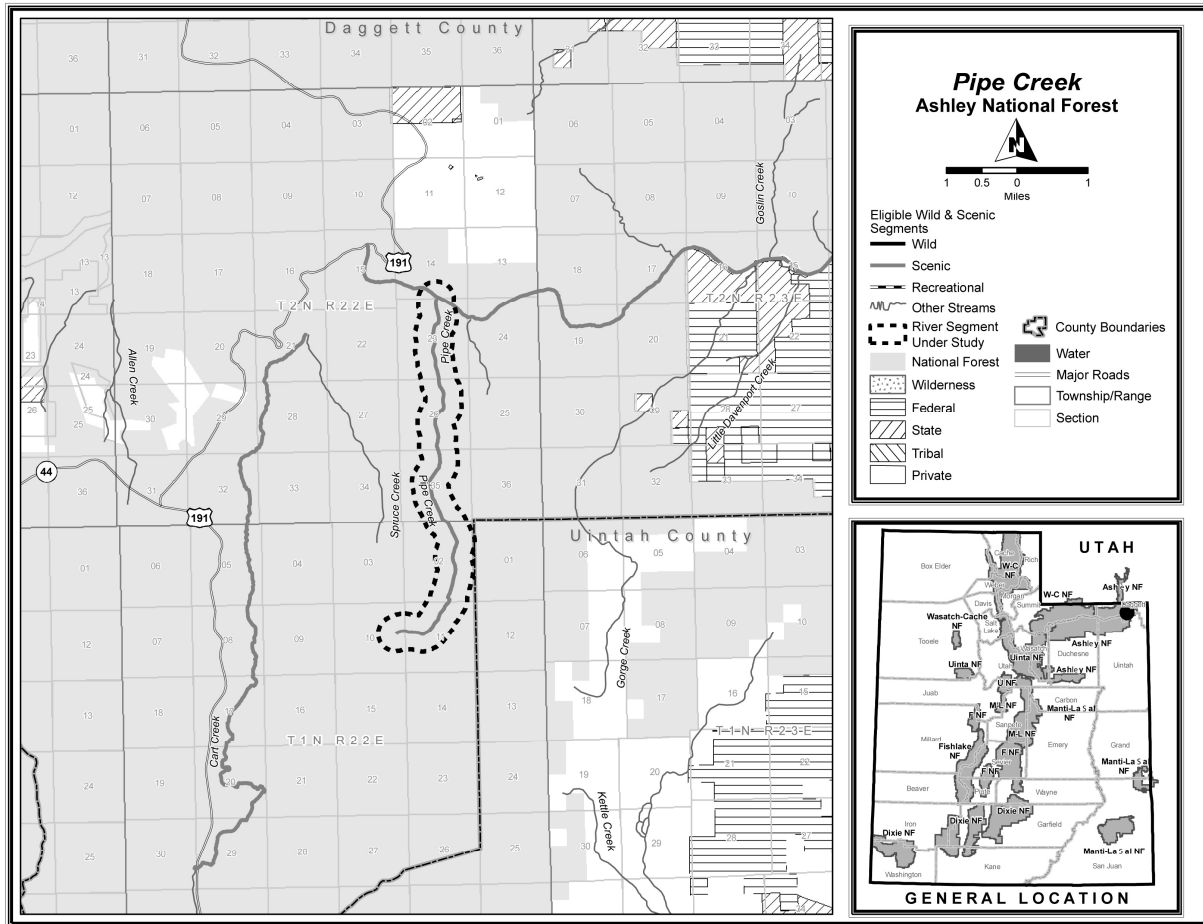


Pipe Creek Suitability Evaluation Report (SER)



This detailed river narrative is a brief synopsis of the pertinent information related to eligibility and suitability determination for the specific river identified above.

STUDY AREA SUMMARY

Name of River: Pipe Creek

River Mileage:

Studied: 5.59 miles, from the headwaters to the confluence with the Green River.

Eligible: Same

Location:

Pipe Creek	Ashley National Forest, Flaming Gorge Ranger District, Daggett County, Utah		Congressional District UT-2	
	Start (TRS)	End (TRS)	Classification	Miles
Segment 1	SE ¼ NE ¼ Sect. 10, T 1 N, R 22 E, SLM	NW ¼ NE ¼ Sect. 23, T 2 N, R 22 E, SLM	Scenic	5.59

Physical Description of River Segment:

This creek is located on the steep north facing slopes of the Green River a few miles below Flaming Gorge Dam. As the creek descends the steep slopes above the Green River, cascading sections in the

rock-lined channel are visible from the river. The stream is very confined in a deep canyon cut in Uinta Mountain quartzite. Many debris jams exist in the bottom with a very narrow valley bottom. Boulders, cobbles and numerous jams make up much of the bottom. Gradient is steep, and flows are subject to flash flooding. The creek corridor has a variety of streamside riparian habitats from meadow like environments in the headwaters to steep cascading stream and small pool environments in the lower end.

ELIGIBILITY

Name and Date of Eligibility Document: Final Eligibility Determination of Wild and Scenic Rivers, July 2005 (USDA Forest Service 2005)

Determination of Free-flowing Condition: Water quality sufficient to maintain outstandingly remarkable values. There are no diversions or significant channel modifications.

Summary of Outstandingly Remarkable Values:

Cultural – Archaic, Fremont and late prehistoric sites have been found and inventoried. Some of these sites are eligible for listing on the National Register. Current Native American uses are unknown. Significance, Number of Cultures, Site Integrity, and Listing/Eligibility were rated high. Current Uses and Education/ Interpretation were rated moderate. Overall Rating was high with a regional Scale of Importance.

CLASSIFICATION

Basis for the Classification of River Segment: Scenic

- Free of impoundments.
- Largely primitive and undeveloped. No substantial evidence of human activity.
- The presence of grazing or hay production or row crops.
- Evidence of past logging or ongoing timber harvest, provided the forest appears natural from the riverbank.
- Accessible in places by roads. One two-track road crosses the above the headwaters of the creek. The Pipe Creek and Greens Draw Trails (Forest Development Trails 003 and 004) access the upper headwater areas. There are no developed roads in the creek corridor.
- Water quality sufficient to maintain outstandingly remarkable values.

SUITABILITY REPORT

Landownership and Land Uses – This segment is located entirely on the Ashley National Forest, beginning on the Vernal Ranger District and ending on the Flaming Gorge Ranger District (within the Flaming Gorge National Recreation Area).

River Mile	Ownership	Acres
0 – 5.59	Ashley National Forest	1788.8

National Forest System Lands in Daggett County are zoned as Multiple Use Districts. Some of the purposes for providing a Multiple Use District are to establish areas in mountain, hillside, canyon, mountain valley, desert and other open and generally undeveloped lands where human habitation would be limited, in order to protect land and open space resources. These areas are intended to encourage use of the land, where appropriate, for forestry, grazing, agriculture, mining, wildlife habitat, and recreation. Additional purposes include avoiding excessive damage to watersheds, water pollution, soil erosion, danger from brush land fires, damage to grazing, livestock raising, and to wildlife values. Minimum lot size is 40, 80, or 160 acres within these Multiple Use Districts. There are various permitted and conditional uses such as agriculture, forestry, mining, power generation and regulations related to residences. The Uniform Zoning and Subdivision Ordinances for Daggett County are available at

<http://www.Daggettcountry.org/DocumentView.asp?DID=8>.

More information on guidance related to land uses can be found in the Daggett County General Plan, available at <http://Daggettcountry.org/DocumentView.asp?DID=61>.

Mineral and Energy Resource Activities – There are no large past or currently active minerals or energy development activities, mining claims, or minerals leases located adjacent to this river segment (www.geocommunicator.gov). Based on the underlying geology, and lack of past minerals and energy development, little if any future mineral or energy extraction activities would be expected.

Water Resources Development – There are no dams, diversions or significant channel modifications. No potential water development projects are known or expected at this time. The Utah State Water Plan for the Uintah Basin (which includes Daggett County), does not identify any proposed water development projects on this segment. There are Bureau of Reclamation withdrawn lands associated with the Flaming Gorge reservoir, that extend from the confluence with the Green River upstream for approximately 1 mile. Designation into the Wild and Scenic river system does not affect existing, valid water rights.

Transportation, Facilities, and Other Developments – The Pipe Creek and Greens Draw Trails (Forest Development Trails 003 and 004) access the upper headwater areas. There are no developed roads in the creek corridor. One two-track road crosses the above the headwaters of the creek. Some boaters on the Green River stop at the mouth of Creek to fish, but due to the steep terrain, few venture up the creek from the river's edge.

Rights of way—There is one pipeline right of way across the segment, as well as two phone and one power right of way in the corridor.

Grazing Activities – On the Flaming Gorge District portion of this segment, the Birch Creek Little Hole allotment permits 74 cow/calf pairs from June 1-October 10. Use from this allotment is upstream and in the vicinity of the Pipe Creek road. On the Vernal Ranger District side of this segment, the Bowden Draw cattle allotment permits 260 cow/calf pairs from 6/22 – 9/27. Use is mainly in the headwaters and not in the confined canyon sections.

Recreation Activities – Recreation use is light along this creek, with most use occurring in the very upper headwaters. Hiking, horseback riding, hunting and dispersed camping are the primary uses. Concentrated recreation use occurs along the Green River at the mouth of the creek. Fishing and boating activities are ongoing year round.

Other Resource Activities – Timber harvest has occurred in this watershed and could potentially occur in the future. No harvest would be expected along the river corridor.

A 138 kV transmission line originating at the Flaming Gorge Dam power generation facilities crosses the lower section of the creek just above the Green River. The transmission line is difficult to see from the river, due to vegetative cover and the steepness of the slope.

Special Designations – The lower 1.2 miles of this segment are within the Flaming Gorge National Recreation Area (NRA). The legislation establishing this area specified three broad missions and management goals. Specifically, these are to administer, protect, and develop the Flaming Gorge National Recreation Area in a manner to best provide for: (1) public outdoor recreation benefits, (2) conservation of scenic, scientific, historic, and other values contributing to public enjoyment, and (3) management, utilization, and disposal of natural resources that will promote or are compatible with, and do not significantly impair the purpose for which the recreation area was established.

The Ashley National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (1986) identifies the following management prescriptions for this area:

- (n) Range of resource uses and outputs. Commodity production modified for amenity production. Resource protection as needed outside of NRA. The riparian objective is to maintain and restore. This management prescription applies to the majority of the segment outside of the NRA.
- (f) Dispersed Recreation Roaded. Areas receiving a variety of uses in a variety of landforms and vegetation types located throughout the Forest in a roaded environment. The riparian objective is to maintain. Control as needed to protect streambank stability, minimize sedimentation, prevent compaction and maintain visuals. This management prescription applies to some scattered areas outside of the NRA.
- (n₁) National Recreation Area – Existing Situation. These are lands in the NRA that have the existing low management prescription applied. Activities and practices recognize and emphasize the recreation and wildlife values within the NRA. Standards and guidelines are modified to comply with Public Law 90-540. The riparian objective is to protect. This management prescription encompasses the entire area within the NRA.

The entire length of this segment is within inventoried roadless areas.

Socio-Economic Environment – The two main communities in Daggett County are Manila and Dutch John, with populations of 685 and 204, respectively (2007 estimates). The county is set in a spectacular outdoor setting, where traditional land uses such as agriculture, timber harvest and livestock grazing have been important over time. The economy in Daggett County is based primarily on agriculture, livestock, hay, and alfalfa, but it is also an important producer of electric power for Utah and surrounding states. Dutch John originally provided a living place for those who worked at the Flaming Gorge dam.

The Flaming Gorge National Recreation Area, Sheep Creek Geologic Area, Spirit Lake, the Green River and other outdoor attractions draw visitors to the area. Travel and tourism is an integral part of the local economy. The Flaming Gorge reservoir and the Green river are regional and national attractions. Both the reservoir and the Green River play an integral role in the local socio-economic environment. For example, there are 3 raft rental shops and 3 fly shops that cater to river enthusiasts on the Green River. 1.7 million dollars are brought into the area annually from customers of outfitter guides (13 total) on the Green River.

Current Administration and Funding Needs if Designated – The current administering agency is the USFS.

The following information is based on 2001 data, which doesn't account for inflation over the past six years, but is the best available data. If a river is designated as Wild, Scenic, or Recreational, the actual cost of preparing the comprehensive river management plan would average \$200,000 per plan for 86 segments, which would cost approximately \$17.2 million the first two to three years following designation. It was estimated that annual management costs for a high complexity river would be \$200,000; a moderate complexity river would be \$50,000; and a low complexity river at \$25,000. Using an average of complexity costs, it would cost the Forest Service around \$7.8 million annually for 86 segments. (Estimated Costs of Wild and Scenic Rivers Program - V. 091104)

SUITABILITY FACTOR ASSESSMENT

(1) The extent and determination of the degree to which the agency proposes or a State or its political subdivisions might participate in the shared preservation and administration of the river, including the costs thereof, should it be proposed for inclusion in the System.

The State of Utah has not shown interest or disinterest in the designation of these segments. Local county officials do not support Wild and Scenic designation for this segment, and would not share in the costs.

(2) The state/local government’s ability to manage and protect the outstandingly remarkable values on non-federal lands. Include any conflicting local zoning and/or land use controls that could occur.

National Forest System Lands in Daggett County are zoned as Multiple Use Districts. Some of the purposes for providing a Multiple Use District are to establish areas in mountain, hillside, canyon, mountain valley, desert and other open and generally undeveloped lands where human habitation would be limited, in order to protect land and open space resources. These areas are intended to encourage use of the land, where appropriate, for forestry, grazing, agriculture, mining, wildlife habitat, and recreation. Additional purposes include avoiding excessive damage to watersheds, water pollution, soil erosion, danger from brush land fires, damage to grazing, livestock raising, and to wildlife values.

Wild and Scenic designation would be inconsistent with the stated purposes of forestry, grazing, agriculture, and mining. Designation would be consistent with the protection of land and open space resources, wildlife habitat, avoiding excessive damage to watersheds, water pollution, soil erosion, and danger from fires.

(3) Support or opposition to designation.

Comments received during the eligibility study

Daggett County officials and various members of the public were opposed to designation. Some reasons for opposition were potential effects to water rights, potential effects to reservoir and canal system management, potential effects to future water developments, and that other means of protection of outstandingly remarkable values are available.

The High Uintas Preservation Council, the Uinta Mountain Club, the Utah Rivers Council, and various members of the public were in support of designation. Some reasons in support of designation were the preservation of various outstandingly remarkable values, the prevention of further development or modification of river segments, and the protection of river segments within inventoried roadless areas.

Comments received during scoping for the suitability study

One letter specifically mentioned Pipe Creek. It was submitted by Sweetwater County Conservation District on behalf of Sweetwater County and Conservation District and Uinta County Conservation District in Wyoming. The letter stated that residents of those counties would be affected by designation of the Green River, raised questions about the study process, and requested cooperating agency status for all three entities.

Comments responding to the draft EIS

Of the three organized campaigns none suggested a finding of suitability for this segment.

(4) The consistency of designation with other agency plans, programs or policies and in meeting regional objectives.

Designation would complement the existing direction in the NRA and inventoried roadless areas.

As discussed in suitability factor (2), designation could be both inconsistent and consistent with county zoning ordinances. The Daggett County General Plan does not specifically address Wild and Scenic River designation, but it does make the following statement about water resources:

“Adequate water quality and availability is necessary for significant residential, industrial, commercial, agricultural, and recreational development. Daggett County desires to protect and enhance the quality and quantity of usable water by promoting and expanding the efficient management and use of water resources. The County also feels that private water rights should be protected from encroachment and/or coerced acquisition.”

Further indication of the County’s position regarding Wild and Scenic River designation can be found in an amendment to their General Plan (responding to a BLM Wild and Scenic River study):

“It is Daggett County’s policy that no river segment should be included in the National Wild and Scenic River System unless:

- Water is present and flowing at all times.
- The water-related value is considered outstandingly remarkable within a region of comparison consisting of one of three physiographic provinces of the state, and that the rationale and justification for the conclusion are disclosed.
- BLM fully disclaims in writing any interest in water rights with respect to the subject segment.
- It is clearly demonstrated that including segment in the NWSR system will not prevent, reduce, impair, or otherwise interfere with the state and its citizen’s enjoyment of complete and exclusive water rights in and to rivers of the state as determined by the laws of the state, nor interfere with or impair local, state, regional, or interstate water compacts to which the State or Daggett County is a party.
- The rationale and justification for the proposed addition, including a comparison with protections offered by other management tools, is clearly analyzed within the multiple-use mandate, and the results disclosed.
- It is clearly demonstrated that BLM does not intend to use such a designation to improperly impose Class I or II Visual Resource Management prescriptions.
- It is clearly demonstrated that the proposed addition will not adversely impact the local economy agricultural and industrial operations, outdoor recreation, water rights, water quality, water resource planning, and access to and across river corridors in both upstream and downstream directions from the proposed river segment.

The foregoing also summarizes the wild and scenic river criteria of the State of Utah, Utah Code ' 63-38d-401(8)(a), as well as the criteria of Daggett County.”

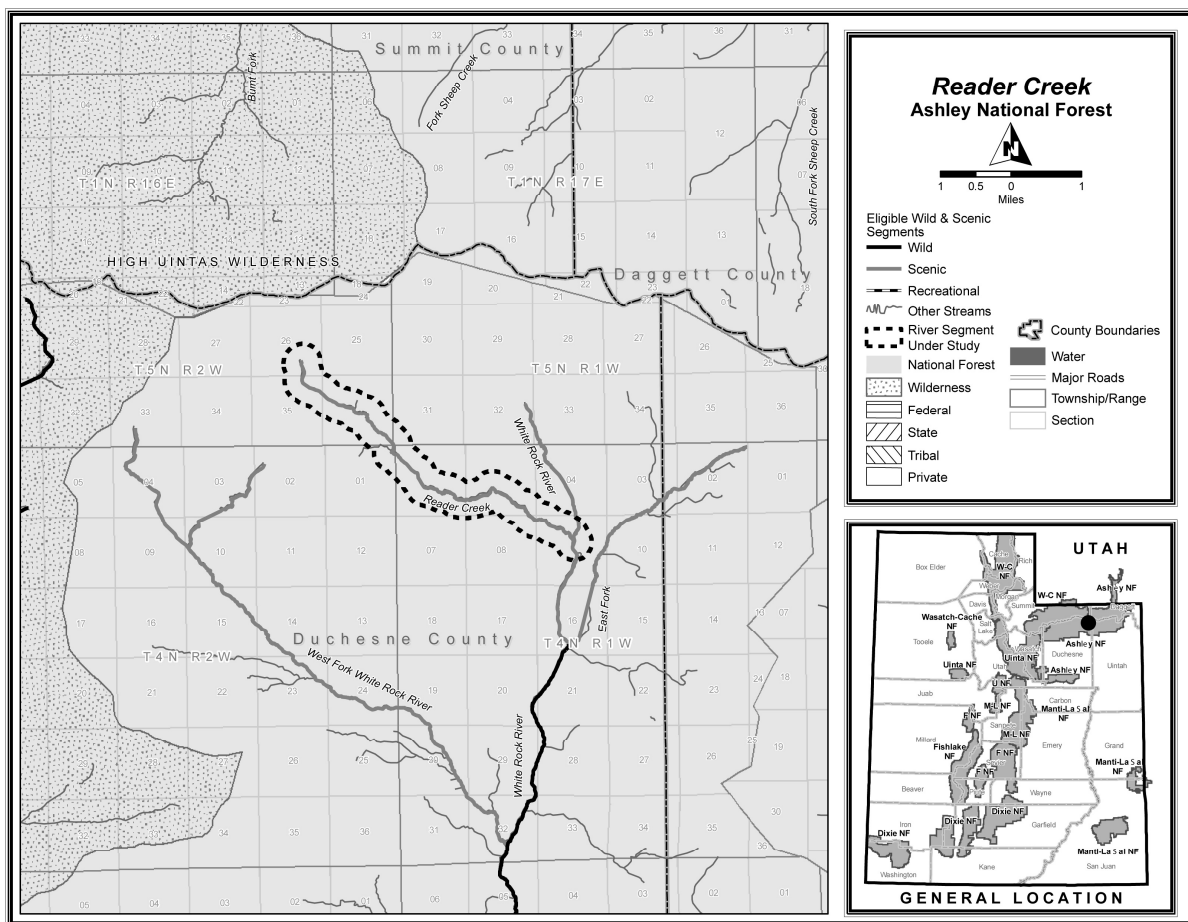
(5) Contribution to river system or basin integrity.

The proposed segment includes the majority of the watershed, which would offer good basin integrity and the opportunity to design a holistic protection strategy. Designation would provide a comprehensive and holistic protection strategy with other cooperating agencies and public groups. This entire segment is on National Forest System Lands, so the current proposal could not be expanded to other jurisdictions or ownerships.

(6) Demonstrated or potential commitment for public volunteers, partnerships, and/or stewardship commitments for management and/or funding of the river segment.

There has not been a demonstrated interest or disinterest in public volunteers, partnerships or stewardship commitments.

Reader Creek Suitability Evaluation Report (SER)



STUDY AREA SUMMARY

Name of River: Reader Creek

River Mileage:

Studied: 6.0 miles, from Reader Lakes to the junction with Upper Whiterocks River.

Eligible: Same

Location:

Reader Creek	Ashley National Forest, Vernal Ranger District, Duchesne County, Utah		Congressional District 2	
	Start	End	Classification	Miles
Segment 1	SW ¼ SE ¼ Sect 26, T 5 N, R 2 W, USM	SW ¼ NE ¼ Sect. 9, T 4 N, R 1 W, USM	Scenic	6.0

Physical Description of River Segment:

This segment descends through a broad low relief upper glaciated basin in Uinta Mountain quartzite. Wet meadows dominate this segment, and numerous seeps and springs are located adjacent to the meadow areas. These meadows are former lakes filled in by sediments following glaciation. As the stream moves

laterally across the meadow, large chunks of bank are undercut. The watercourse corridor exhibits an excellent geomorphic example of glaciation, both scour and deposition. There are natural waterfalls, bedrock at the surface, and lateral moraines along the watercourse corridor. The watercourse corridor reveals unique educational examples of glaciation and hydrologic actions.

ELIGIBILITY

Name and Date of Eligibility Document: Final Eligibility of Wild & Scenic Rivers - Ashley National Forest, July 2005

Determination of Free-flowing Condition: The segment is free from channel modifications and structures. The natural stream flow of the river is unimpaired. The segment is free-flowing.

Summary of Outstandingly Remarkable Values (ORV): The scenic, recreation, geologic/hydrologic, and fisheries ORVs have all been identified as regionally important, where other similar values were noted as having national importance, and the wildlife ORV as being less than regionally important.

Scenic – The river, lakes, and streams cross through a striking landscape of basins, meadows, ridgelines and peaks. Riparian areas and meadows provide seasonal variation in color during late fall months. There is exceptional contrast in vegetative cover with the high ridges that parallel both sides of the river and tributary. The corridor offers panoramic vistas of the peaks of the High Uintas backcountry, including cirques, lakes, and small streams along the corridor length.

Recreational – Reader Creek receives moderate to heavy use from backpackers, recreation stock and day use activities from late June to mid-October. Recreationists are attracted to these areas because of outstanding backcountry scenery, solitude, and fishing. Deer and elk hunting also occur along the segments in the fall months. Snowmobiling occurs within the corridor during winter months.

Geologic/Hydrologic – This segment descends through a broad low relief upper glaciated basin in Uinta Mountain quartzite. The area contains hummocky ground moraine and wet meadows. Wet meadows dominate this segment, and numerous seeps and springs are located adjacent to the meadow areas. These meadows are former lakes filled in by sediments following glaciation. Organic soils are found along much of the wet meadow stream reaches. As the stream moves laterally across the meadow, large chunks of bank are undercut. The watercourse corridor exhibits an excellent geomorphic example of glaciation, both scour and deposition. There are natural waterfalls, bedrock at the surface, and lateral moraines along the watercourse corridor. The watercourse corridor reveals unique educational examples of glaciation and hydrologic actions.

Fish – Several lakes are present along the stair-step series of benches from the upper to lower basin. Current fish populations include stocked brook trout and relict native Colorado River Cutthroat Trout. The stream is a reference reach for evaluating stream habitat since it is relatively unaltered by management activity. Treatments to eliminate the brook trout and enhance the cutthroat population were planned for the years 2000-2004. Colorado Cut Throat Trout restoration is continuing in Reader Creek.

Wildlife – Wildlife communities at this elevation are composed of alpine species usually not found at lower elevations. Ptarmigan may use the willows along the banks of this segment at certain times of the year. Ptarmigan were released in the Uinta Mountains some time ago and are stable or slowly increasing. The riparian vegetation also provides habitat for Neotropical birds, i.e., Lincolns and song sparrows. The watercourses cross through important summer range for both deer and elk, and the travel corridor for mountain goats.

Other Similar Values – Reader Creek cuts through glacial moraines with an overstory cover of subalpine

fir and Engelmann spruce. The riparian vegetation consists of cinquefoil meadows with sedges, grasses and low growth willows. Marsh marigold and elephant head are common forbs in wet areas. The corridor is the epicenter for Colorado River Cutthroat Trout reintroduction, and is essential for genetic interaction. There are good examples of permafrost and sphagnum moss within the watercourse corridor. Reader Creek corridor is a textbook example of plant and animal associations.

CLASSIFICATION

Basis for the Classification of River – Scenic

Reader Creek is eligible for the Wild and Scenic River System. It is classified as a Scenic river.

SUITABILITY REPORT

Landownership and Land Uses – This segment is located entirely on the Ashley National Forest, Vernal Ranger District.

River Mile	Ownership	Acres
0-6.0	Ashley National Forest	1920

In Duchesne County, National Forest System Lands are zoned as A-10, agricultural 10 acre minimum lot size. Purposes related to Forest management in this zone include the protection of the economic base of the county for such uses as forestry, oil and gas drilling, pipelines, petroleum storage and distribution and the protection of significant natural features of land, creeks, lakes, wetlands, air and the preservation of open areas for wildlife habitat, and range livestock (Zoning Ordinance 05-240).

<http://www.duchesnegov.net/planning/05240zoningordfinal.pdf>

Mineral and Energy Resource Activities – There are no large past or currently active minerals or energy development activities, mining claims, or minerals leases located adjacent to this river segment (www.geocommunicator.gov). Based on the underlying geology, and lack of past minerals and energy development, little if any future mineral or energy extraction activities would be expected.

Water Resources Development – There are no dams, diversions, or other channel modifications on this segment. No future developments are known or expected at this time.

The Utah State Water Plan for the Uintah Basin (1999) identifies a shortage of irrigation water that generally occurs during July and August due to inadequate reservoir storage in the Uintah basin. The recommendation of this report is that storage reservoirs should be constructed on the Yellowstone River (near Altonah), Uinta River (near Neola) and Whiterocks River (near Whiterocks), as well as upper and lower Ashley Creek (Utah State Water Plan – Uintah Basin – 1999, pages 10-6 and 13-8). The report also recommends bank stabilization along Dry Fork (near Maeser). Bank stabilization, rebuilding old meander bends, and larger bridges were also recommended along Ashley Creek.

No proposed water development projects in the Utah State Water Plan for the Uintah Basin are proposed on this eligible Wild and Scenic river segment. All of these proposed projects are downstream of the Ashley National Forest, and are not expected to alter (or be altered by) potential Wild and Scenic designation. Designation into the Wild and Scenic river system does not affect existing, valid water rights.

Transportation, Facilities, and Other Developments – Forest Development Road 110 crosses lower portion of this segment. Foot bridges exist at various river and stream trail crossings.

Grazing Activities – There is no permitted livestock use on this segment.

Recreation Activities – Reader Creek receives moderate to heavy use from backpackers, recreation stock and day use activities from late June to mid-October. Recreationists are attracted to these areas because of outstanding backcountry scenery, solitude, and fishing. Deer and elk hunting also occur along the segments in the fall months. Snowmobiling occurs within the corridor during winter months.

Other Resource Activities – Timber harvest has occurred in this watershed and could potentially occur in the future. No harvest would be expected along the river corridor.

Historic sheep trails and cairns are located along Reader Creek and add value to the quality of visitor experience. These sites have the potential of being listed on the National Register of Historic Places, with accompanying interpretation activities.

There is evidence of transient use of these areas by archaic, Fremont and late prehistoric cultures, found mainly near the upper headwaters of the segment. The sites are in good to excellent condition and are considered potentially eligible for listing in the National Register.

Special Designations – The Ashley National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (1986) identifies the following management prescriptions for this area:

- (n) Range of resource uses and outputs. Commodity production modified for amenity production. Resource protection as needed outside of NRA. The riparian objective is to maintain and restore. This management prescription encompasses the lower two thirds of this segment.
- (g) Undeveloped dispersed recreation – unroaded. These areas are characterized by a variety of timbered and non-timbered lands between mid and high elevations. The riparian objective is to protect. This prescription applies to the upper third of this segment.

This segment is located within the Tridell/LaPoint Drinking Water Source Protection Zone, as identified by the State of Utah.

All of the Reader Creek segment (except the crossing of Forest Road 110) is within inventoried roadless areas.

Socio-Economic Environment – Some of the downstream communities in Uintah County include Whiterocks, Tridell, Lapoint, and Fort Duchesne. Vernal is the largest community in the basin with an estimated population of 7, 577 (2007 estimate). These communities are set in a picturesque rural environment, where traditional land uses such as agriculture, timber harvest and grazing have been important over time.

The economy in the Uintah Basin relies largely on agriculture, industry, traditional land uses, and tourism. Oil and gas, manufacturing, and construction are important growth industries. In recent years, oil and gas activities have increased dramatically. Oil and gas operations are evident in many areas, consisting of well sites, gathering lines and distribution sites. The Uintah and Ouray Indian Reservation lies within and adjacent to the county boundaries, which provides an important social and economic context to the Uintah Basin (<http://duchesne.net/demo/>)

The Uintah Basin has been affected by the boom and bust cycles related to the oil and gas industry over the years, but in spite of these cycles the population and economy are expected to grow. The long term outlook for the economy in the Uintah Basin is positive, with growth in oil and gas, minerals, and tourism (http://www.water.utah.gov/planning/SWP/Unitah/swp_ub02.pdf).

Travel and tourism in the area is generally related to the abundant outdoor opportunities, including motorized and non-motorized recreation, camping, hunting, fishing, Dinosaur National Monument etc.

Current Administration and Funding Needs if Designated – The current administering agency is the USFS.

The following information is based on 2001 data, which doesn't account for inflation over the past six years, but is the best available data. If a river is designated as Wild, Scenic, or Recreational, the actual cost of preparing the comprehensive river management plan would average \$200,000 per plan for 86 segments, which would cost approximately \$17.2 million the first two to three years following designation. It was estimated that annual management costs for a high complexity river would be \$200,000; a moderate complexity river would be \$50,000; and a low complexity river at \$25,000. Using an average of complexity costs, it would cost the Forest Service around \$7.8 million annually for 86 segments. (Estimated Costs of Wild and Scenic Rivers Program - V. 091104)

SUITABILITY FACTOR ASSESSMENT:

(1) The extent and determination of the degree to which the agency proposes or a State or its political subdivisions might participate in the shared preservation and administration of the river, including the costs thereof, should it be proposed for inclusion in the System.

The State of Utah has not shown interest or disinterest in the designation of these segments. Local county officials do not support Wild and Scenic designation, and would not share in the costs.

(2) The state/local government's ability to manage and protect the outstandingly remarkable values on non-federal lands. Include any conflicting local zoning and/or land use controls that could occur.

In Duchesne County, National Forest System Lands are zoned as A-10, agricultural 10 acre minimum lot size. Purposes related to Forest management in this zone include the protection of the economic base of the county for such uses as forestry, oil and gas drilling, pipelines, petroleum storage and distribution and the protection of significant natural features of land, creeks, lakes, wetlands, air and the preservation of open areas for wildlife habitat, and range livestock (Zoning Ordinance 05-240).

<http://www.duchesnegov.net/planning/05240zoningordfinal.pdf>

Wild and Scenic designation would be inconsistent with the stated purposes of forestry, oil and gas drilling, pipelines, petroleum storage and distribution. Designation would be consistent with the protection of significant natural features of land, creeks, lakes, wetlands, air and the preservation of open areas for wildlife habitat.

(3) Support or opposition to designation.

Comments received during the eligibility study

Uintah County officials, the Uintah County Water Conservancy District, and various members of the public were opposed to designation. Some reasons for opposition were potential effects to downstream water rights, potential effects to reservoir and canal system management, potential effects to future water developments, and that other means of protecting outstandingly remarkable values are available.

The High Uintas Preservation Council, the Uinta Mountain Club, the Utah Rivers Council, and various members of the public were in support of designation. Some reasons in support of designation were the preservation of various outstandingly remarkable values, the prevention of further development or modification of river segments, the protection of river segments within inventoried roadless areas, and the protection of water quality within municipal watersheds.

Comments received during scoping for the suitability study

Letters of support were received from several individuals and non-profit organizations. All of these letters addressed Reader Creek in combination with other eligible segments of the Whiterocks river system. Values cited included the remote, undeveloped setting; the diversity of scenery, terrain and habitat types present; and the collective contribution of these segments to river system or basin integrity.

Some letters specifically mentioned Reader Creek's importance as a native cutthroat trout fishery.

No potential reservoir sites have been identified on or above Reader Creek. However, the Uintah Water Conservancy District was concerned that designation would curtail or foreclose water rights. UWCD also stated that Reader Creek "is dry or flows very little water much of the year". Other letters contradicted this statement.

Comments responding to the Draft EIS

Among the organizations and individuals in favor of WSR designation there was particularly strong support for rivers highlighted in the Utah Rivers Council letter, i.e.: Whiterocks River, including the Upper, West Fork, East Fork and Middle Main sections as well as Reader Creek. Many letters commented that all segments within a single river system should be considered together, because they are ecologically connected and a joint recommendation would enhance their contribution to the river system's integrity. Common examples included: Whiterocks River, including the Upper, West Fork, East Fork and Middle Main sections as well as Reader Creek

The Ashley Creek and Whiterocks river systems provide virtually all the water used by residents in the eastern Uintah Basin. Local officials and residents expressed great concern that operation of existing facilities would be restricted, compromising water rights and affecting local economies. Rapid population growth and potential oil shale development activities were also cited as reasons to retain the option of building additional water storage and delivery systems in these systems.

Proponents of designation for Whiterocks and Ashley Creeks cited the opportunity to protect large, intact watersheds and for their scenic, recreational and wildlife values. Ashley Creek in particular spans many life zones, from alpine to cottonwood – more than any other segment or combination of segments in the study. :

A common theme was that all rivers within Wilderness or roadless areas should be designated, in part because they pose few conflicts with other uses or activities and would be relatively simple to manage. In addition to the Wilderness rivers listed above, the following rivers were recommended based on being all or mostly within roadless: South Fork Ashley Creek, Ashley Gorge, all of the Whiterocks segments, and Lower Dry Fork (these are examples; different letters cited different examples). Of the three organized campaigns, all supported a finding of suitability for this segment.

(4) The consistency of designation with other agency plans, programs or policies and in meeting regional objectives.

Designation would complement the existing direction in management prescription areas and inventoried roadless areas.

Designation would also be consistent with the joint efforts of the Ashley National Forest and the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources in restoring and improving native Colorado Cutthroat trout habitat. Treatments to remove brook trout and enhance the native cutthroat population were planned for 2000-2004. Reader Creek is the key stream in the Whiterocks drainage that holds genetically pure Colorado Cutthroat trout, and is the center of efforts to restore a meta- population of trout in the larger Whiterocks drainage.

As discussed in suitability factor (2), designation could be both inconsistent and consistent with county zoning ordinances. The Duchesne County General Plan states that special designations, including wild and scenic rivers, "may result in non-use, restricted use, or environmental impacts on public and private lands. Special designations dictate practices that restrict access or use of the land that impact other resources or their use. Such designations cause resource waste, serious impacts to other important resources and actions, and are inconsistent with the principles of multiple use and sustained yield." The

County's position is that:

- The objectives of special designations can be met by well-planned and managed development of natural resources.
- No special designations shall be proposed until the need has been determined and substantiated by verifiable scientific data available to the public. Furthermore, it must be demonstrated that protection cannot be provided by other means and that the area in question is truly unique compared to other area lands.
- Special designations can be detrimental to the County's economy, life style, culture, and heritage. Therefore special designations must be made in accordance with the spirit and direction of the laws and regulations that created them.

With respect to Wild and Scenic Rivers, County support will be withheld until:

- It is clearly demonstrated that water is present and flowing at all times;
- It is clearly demonstrated that the required water-related value is considered outstandingly remarkable within a region of comparison consisting of one of the three physiographic provinces in the state. The rationale and justification for the conclusions shall be disclosed;
- The effects of the addition on the local and state economies, private property rights, agricultural and industrial operations and interests, tourism, water rights, water quality, water resource planning, and access to and across river corridors in both upstream and downstream directions from the proposed river segment have been evaluated in detail by the relevant federal agency;
- It is clearly demonstrated that the provisions and terms of the process for review of potential additions have been applied in a consistent manner by all federal agencies; and
- The rationale and justification for the proposed addition, including a comparison with protections offered by other management tools, is clearly analyzed within the multiple-use mandate, and the results disclosed. All valid existing rights, including grazing leases and permits shall not be affected.

(5) Contribution to river system or basin integrity.

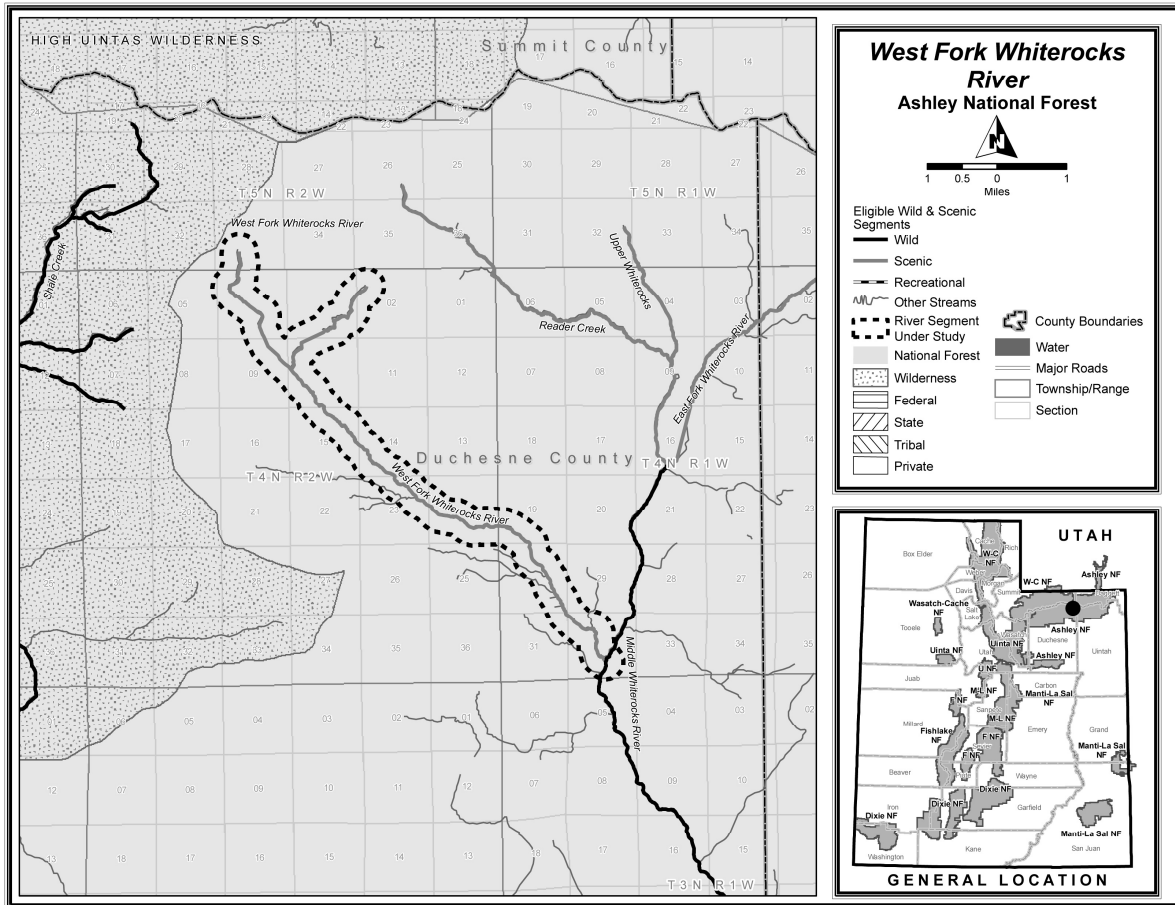
The proposed segment includes the majority of the Reader Creek watershed, which would offer good basin integrity and the opportunity to develop holistic protection strategies. In addition, basin integrity of the larger watershed could be improved by considering the additional segments in this watershed together, including Upper Whiterocks, East Fork Whiterocks, Middle Whiterocks, and West Fork Whiterocks.

This entire segment is on National Forest System Lands, so the current proposal could not be expanded to other jurisdictions or ownerships.

(6) Demonstrated or potential commitment for public volunteers, partnerships, and/or stewardship commitments for management and/or funding of the river segment.

There has not been a demonstrated interest or disinterest in public volunteers, partnerships or stewardship commitments.

West Fork Whiterocks River Suitability Evaluation Report (SER)



STUDY AREA SUMMARY

Name of River: West Fork Whiterocks River

River Mileage:

Studied: 11.2 miles, from Fox/Queant Pass to the junction with Middle Whiterocks River. The lakes in the headwaters and smaller tributaries, including Cleveland and Queant Lakes are part of this segment.

Eligible: Same

Location:

West Fork Whiterocks River	Ashley National Forest, Vernal Ranger District, Duchesne and Uintah County, Utah		Congressional District 2	
	Start	End	Classification	Miles
Segment 1	SE ¼ SW ¼ Sect. 33, T 5 N, R 2 W, USM	NW ¼ SE ¼ Sect. 32, T 4 N, R 1 W, USM	Scenic	11.2

Physical Description of River Segment:

This watercourse cuts through elongated lateral moraines that are generally dry, with active stream bank cutting occurring. The upper reaches of this segment are similar to segments Upper Whiterocks River and East Fork Whiterocks River. From approximately Forest Development Road 110, the stream descends a

moderately steep gradient, fast moving stream similar to Middle Whiterocks River. There are low-lying meadows and depressions where water sedge is common in the upper part of the segment. Other riparian dependent species include plainleaf willow. Timber oatgrass occurs on drier upland parts of meadows.

ELIGIBILITY

Name and Date of Eligibility Document: Final Eligibility of Wild & Scenic Rivers - Ashley National Forest, July 2005

Determination of Free-flowing Condition: The segment is free from channel modifications and structures. The natural stream flow of the river is unimpaired. The segment is free-flowing.

Summary of Outstandingly Remarkable Values (ORV): The scenic and recreation ORVs have been identified as regionally important.

Scenic – The river crosses through a striking landscape of basins, meadows, ridgelines and peaks. Riparian areas and meadows provide seasonal variation in color during late fall months. There is exceptional contrast in vegetative cover with the high ridges that parallel both sides of the river and tributary. The corridor offers panoramic vistas of the peaks of the High Uintas backcountry, including cirques, lakes, and small streams along the corridor length.

Recreation – West Fork Whiterocks River receive moderate to heavy use from backpackers, recreation stock and day use activities from late June to mid-October. Recreationists are attracted to these areas because of outstanding backcountry scenery, solitude, and fishing. Deer and elk hunting also occur along the segments in the fall months. Snowmobiling occurs within the corridor during winter months. Forest Development Road 110 crosses at bridge locations in the lower portion of the segment. A developed trailhead is located adjacent to this road and serves as the access point to the trail within the segment. Foot bridges exist at various river and stream trail crossings.

CLASSIFICATION

Basis for the Classification of River – Scenic

The West Fork Whiterocks is accessible in places by road. It is classified as scenic river.

SUITABILITY REPORT

Landownership and Land Uses – This segment is located entirely on the Ashley National Forest, Vernal Ranger District.

River Mile	Ownership	Acres
0-11.2	Ashley National Forest	3584.0

In Duchesne County, National Forest System Lands are zoned as A-10, agricultural 10 acre minimum lot size. Purposes related to Forest management in this zone include the protection of the economic base of the county for such uses as forestry, oil and gas drilling, pipelines, petroleum storage and distribution and the protection of significant natural features of land, creeks, lakes, wetlands, air and the preservation of open areas for wildlife habitat, and range livestock (Zoning Ordinance 05-240).

<http://www.duchesnegov.net/planning/05240zoningordfinal.pdf>

Mineral and Energy Resource Activities – There are no large past or currently active minerals or energy development activities, mining claims, or minerals leases located adjacent to this river segment (www.geocommunicator.gov). Based on the underlying geology and lack of past minerals and energy development, little if any future mineral or energy extraction activities would be expected.

Water Resources Development – There are no dams, diversions, or other channel modifications on this segment. No future developments are known or expected at this time.

The Utah State Water Plan for the Uintah Basin (1999) identifies a shortage of irrigation water that generally occurs during July and August due to inadequate reservoir storage in the Uintah basin. The recommendation of this report is that storage reservoirs should be constructed on the Yellowstone River (near Altonah), Uinta River (near Neola) and Whiterocks River (near Whiterocks), as well as upper and lower Ashley Creek (Utah State Water Plan – Uintah Basin – 1999, pages 10-6 and 13-8). The report also recommends bank stabilization along Dry Fork (near Maeser). Bank stabilization, rebuilding old meander bends, and larger bridges were also recommended along Ashley Creek.

No proposed water development projects in the Utah State Water Plan for the Uintah Basin are proposed on eligible Wild and Scenic river segments. All of these proposed projects are downstream of the Ashley National Forest, and are not expected to alter (or be altered by) potential Wild and Scenic designation. Designation into the Wild and Scenic river system does not affect existing, valid water rights.

Transportation, Facilities, and Other Developments – Forest Development Road 110 crosses the lower portion of this segment. West Fork Whiterocks trailhead is located adjacent to the segment. Foot bridges exist at various river and stream trail crossings.

Grazing Activities – There is no permitted livestock use on this segment. There is a sheep allotment that is now closed.

Recreation Activities – This canyon is a popular area for hiking and dispersed recreation. The area provides access to the High Uintas Wilderness via the Whiterocks trailhead and Fox/Queant Pass.

Other Resource Activities – Timber harvests have occurred in this watershed and could potentially occur in the future. No harvest would be expected along the river corridor. Overlook pullouts and visitor information sites are located along "The Causeway" to the north of the canyon areas.

Special Designations – The Ashley National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (1986) identifies the following management prescriptions for this area:

- (n) Range of resource uses and outputs. Commodity production modified for amenity production. Resource protection as needed outside of NRA. The riparian objective is to maintain and restore. This management prescription encompasses the lower half of the segment.
- (g) Undeveloped dispersed recreation – unroaded. These areas are characterized by a variety of timbered and non-timbered lands between mid and high elevations. The riparian objective is to protect. This prescription applies to the upper half of the segment.

This segment is located within the Tridell/LaPoint Drinking Water Source Protection Zone, as identified by the State of Utah.

The upper half of this segment is within an inventoried roadless area.

Socio-Economic Environment – Some of the downstream communities in Uintah County include Whiterocks, Tridell, Lapoint, and Fort Duchesne. Vernal is the largest community in the basin with an estimated population of 7, 577 (2007 estimate). These communities are set in a picturesque rural environment, where traditional land uses such as agriculture, timber harvest and grazing have been important over time.

The economy in the Uintah Basin relies largely on agriculture, industry, traditional land uses, and tourism. Oil and gas, manufacturing, and construction are important growth industries. In recent years, oil and gas activities have increased dramatically. Oil and gas operations are evident in many areas, consisting of well sites, gathering lines and distribution sites. The Uintah and Ouray Indian Reservation lies within and adjacent to the county boundaries, which provides an important social and economic context to the Uintah Basin (<http://duchesne.net/demo/>)

The Uintah Basin has been affected by the boom and bust cycles related to the oil and gas industry over

the years, but in spite of these cycles the population and economy are expected to grow. The long term outlook for the economy in the Uintah Basin is positive, with growth in oil and gas, minerals, and tourism (http://www.water.utah.gov/planning/SWP/Uintah/swp_ub02.pdf).

Travel and tourism in the area is generally related to the abundant outdoor opportunities, including motorized and non-motorized recreation, camping, hunting, fishing, Dinosaur National Monument etc.

Current Administration and Funding Needs if Designated – The current administering agency is the USFS.

The following information is based on 2001 data, which doesn't account for inflation over the past six years, but is the best available data. If a river is designated as Wild, Scenic, or Recreational, the actual cost of preparing the comprehensive river management plan would average \$200,000 per plan for 86 segments, which would cost approximately \$17.2 million the first two to three years following designation. It was estimated that annual management costs for a high complexity river would be \$200,000; a moderate complexity river would be \$50,000; and a low complexity river at \$25,000. Using an average of complexity costs, it would cost the Forest Service around \$7.8 million annually for 86 segments. (Estimated Costs of Wild and Scenic Rivers Program - V. 091104)

SUITABILITY FACTOR ASSESSMENT:

(1) The extent and determination of the degree to which the agency proposes or a State or its political subdivisions might participate in the shared preservation and administration of the river, including the costs thereof, should it be proposed for inclusion in the System.

The State of Utah has not shown interest or disinterest in the designation of these segments. Local county officials do not support Wild and Scenic designation, and would not share in the costs.

(2) The state/local government's ability to manage and protect the outstandingly remarkable values on non-federal lands. Include any conflicting local zoning and/or land use controls that could occur.

In Duchesne County, National Forest System Lands are zoned as A-10, agricultural 10 acre minimum lot size. Purposes related to Forest management in this zone include the protection of the economic base of the county for such uses as forestry, oil and gas drilling, pipelines, petroleum storage and distribution and the protection of significant natural features of land, creeks, lakes, wetlands, air and the preservation of open areas for wildlife habitat, and range livestock (Zoning Ordinance 05-240).

<http://www.duchesnegov.net/planning/05240zoningordfinal.pdf>

Wild and Scenic designation would be inconsistent with the stated purposes of forestry, oil and gas drilling, pipelines, petroleum storage and distribution. Designation would be consistent with the protection of significant natural features of land, creeks, lakes, wetlands, air and the preservation of open areas for wildlife habitat.

(3) Support or opposition to designation.

Comments received during the eligibility study

Uintah County officials, the Uintah County Water Conservancy District, and various members of the public were opposed to designation. Some reasons for opposition were potential effects to downstream water rights, potential effects to reservoir and canal system management, potential effects to future water developments, and that other means of protecting outstandingly remarkable values are available.

The High Uintas Preservation Council, the Uinta Mountain Club, the Utah Rivers Council, and various members of the public were in support of designation. Some reasons in support of designation were the preservation of various outstandingly remarkable values, the prevention of further development or modification of river segments, the protection of river segments within inventoried roadless areas, and the protection of water quality within municipal watersheds.

Comments received during scoping for the suitability study

Letters of support were received from several individuals and non-profit organizations. Most of these letters addressed the West Fork Whiterocks segment in combination with the other eligible segments of the Whiterocks river system. Values cited included the remote, undeveloped setting; the diversity of scenery, terrain and habitat types present; and the collective contribution of these segments to river system or basin integrity. One letter noted that although there are lakes on the segment that are considered sources of irrigation water (see below), there are no headgates on the lakes so outflows occur naturally.

Letters from the Central Utah Water Conservancy District and Uintah Water Conservancy District opposed designation based on concerns that designation would affect delivery of water for irrigation use or reduce water development potential for the area. The State of Utah commented that two potential reservoir sites have been identified in this drainage, but based on the legal descriptions provided both appear to be downstream of this segment.

One comment letter requested that any portion of the Whiterocks River abutting tar sands deposits not be considered suitable. The only known tar sands deposits are near the Forest boundary, well downstream of this segment.

Comments responding to the Draft EIS

Among the organizations and individuals in favor of WSR designation there was particularly strong support for rivers highlighted in the Utah Rivers Council letter, i.e.: Whiterocks River, including the Upper, West Fork, East Fork and Middle Main sections as well as Reader Creek. Many letters commented that all segments within a single river system should be considered together, because they are ecologically connected and a joint recommendation would enhance their contribution to the river system's integrity. Common examples included: Whiterocks River, including the Upper, West Fork, East Fork and Middle Main sections as well as Reader Creek

The Ashley Creek and Whiterocks river systems provide virtually all the water used by residents in the eastern Uintah Basin. Local officials and residents expressed great concern that operation of existing facilities would be restricted, compromising water rights and affecting local economies. Rapid population growth and potential oil shale development activities were also cited as reasons to retain the option of building additional water storage and delivery systems in these systems.

Proponents of designation for Whiterocks and Ashley Creeks cited the opportunity to protect large, intact watersheds and for their scenic, recreational and wildlife values. Ashley Creek in particular spans many life zones, from alpine to cottonwood – more than any other segment or combination of segments in the study. :

A common theme was that all rivers within Wilderness or roadless areas should be designated, in part because they pose few conflicts with other uses or activities and would be relatively simple to manage. In addition to the Wilderness rivers listed above, the following rivers were recommended based on being all or mostly within roadless: South Fork Ashley Creek, Ashley Gorge, all of the Whiterocks segments, and Lower Dry Fork (these are examples; different letters cited different examples). Of the three organized campaigns all supported a positive finding of suitability for this segment.

(4) The consistency of designation with other agency plans, programs or policies and in meeting regional objectives.

Designation would complement the existing direction in Forest management prescription areas, inventoried roadless areas, and Drinking Water Source Protection Zones for Tridell/LaPoint.

Designation would also complement the joint efforts of the Ashley National Forest and the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources to restore a meta-population of native Colorado Cutthroat trout in the Whiterocks drainage.

As discussed in suitability factor (2), designation could be both inconsistent and consistent with county zoning ordinances. The Duchesne County General Plan states that special designations, including wild and scenic rivers, “may result in non-use, restricted use, or environmental impacts on public and private lands. Special designations dictate practices that restrict access or use of the land that impact other resources or their use. Such designations cause resource waste, serious impacts to other important resources and actions, and are inconsistent with the principles of multiple use and sustained yield.” The County’s position is that:

- The objectives of special designations can be met by well-planned and managed development of natural resources.
- No special designations shall be proposed until the need has been determined and substantiated by verifiable scientific data available to the public. Furthermore, it must be demonstrated that protection cannot be provided by other means and that the area in question is truly unique compared to other area lands.
- Special designations can be detrimental to the County’s economy, life style, culture, and heritage. Therefore special designations must be made in accordance with the spirit and direction of the laws and regulations that created them.

With respect to Wild and Scenic Rivers, County support will be withheld until:

- It is clearly demonstrated that water is present and flowing at all times;
- It is clearly demonstrated that the required water-related value is considered outstandingly remarkable within a region of comparison consisting of one of the three physiographic provinces in the state. The rationale and justification for the conclusions shall be disclosed;
- The effects of the addition on the local and state economies, private property rights, agricultural and industrial operations and interests, tourism, water rights, water quality, water resource planning, and access to and across river corridors in both upstream and downstream directions from the proposed river segment have been evaluated in detail by the relevant federal agency;
- It is clearly demonstrated that the provisions and terms of the process for review of potential additions have been applied in a consistent manner by all federal agencies; and
- The rationale and justification for the proposed addition, including a comparison with protections offered by other management tools, is clearly analyzed within the multiple-use mandate, and the results disclosed. All valid existing rights, including grazing leases and permits shall not be affected.

(5) Contribution to river system or basin integrity.

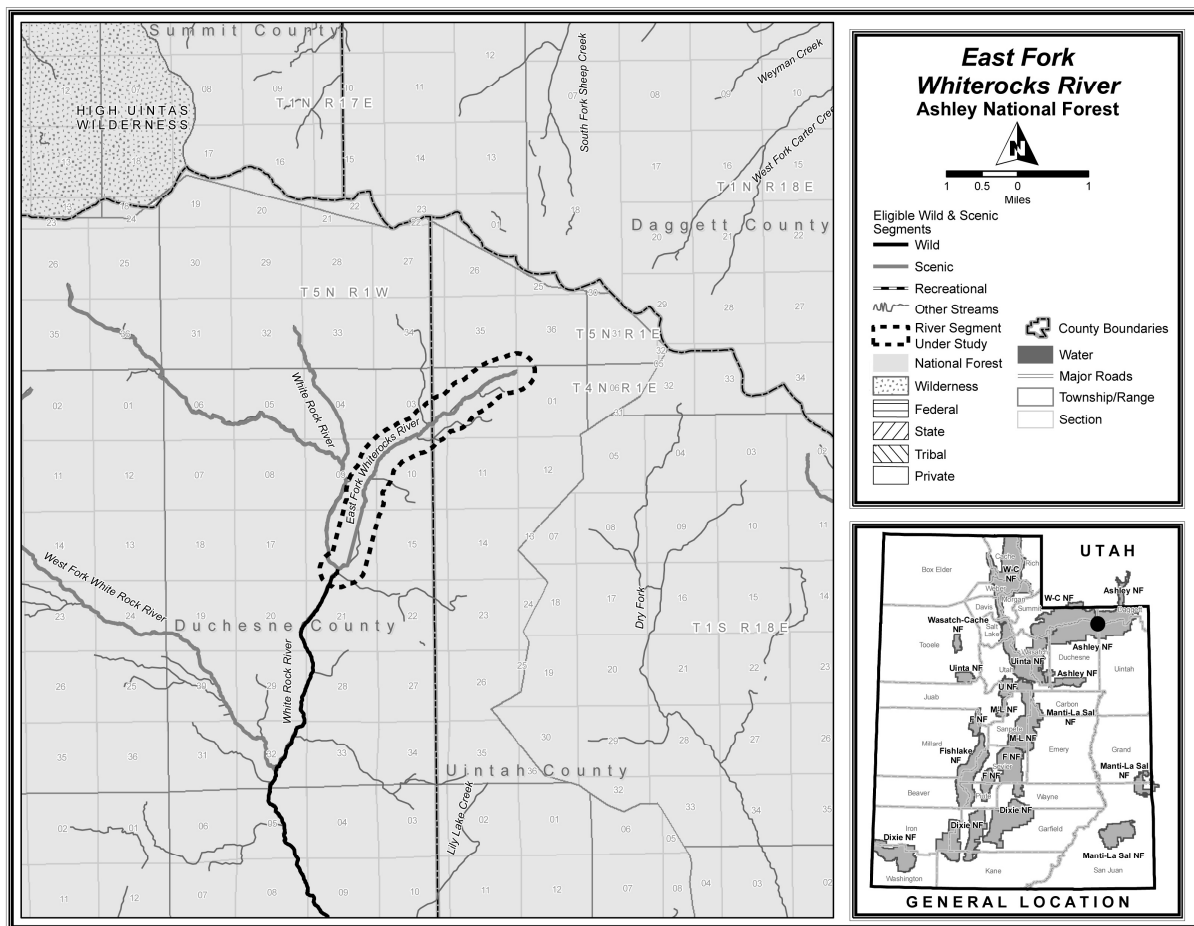
The proposed segment includes the majority of the West Fork Whiterocks watershed, which would offer good basin integrity and the opportunity to develop holistic protection strategies. In addition, basin integrity of the larger watershed could be improved by considering all of the additional segments in this watershed together, including Upper Whiterocks, East Fork Whiterocks, Middle Whiterocks, and Reader Creek.

This entire segment is on National Forest System Lands, so the current proposal could not be expanded to other jurisdictions or ownerships.

(6) Demonstrated or potential commitment for public volunteers, partnerships, and/or stewardship commitments for management and/or funding of the river segment.

There has not been a demonstrated interest or disinterest in public volunteers, partnerships or stewardship commitments.

[illegible]



STUDY AREA SUMMARY

Name of River: Upper and East Fork Whiterocks Creek

River Mileage:

Upper Whiterocks

Studied: 3.93 miles from Chepeta Lake Dam to the junction with East Fork Whiterocks River.

Eligible: Same

East Fork Whiterocks

Studied: 4.33 miles - From the from the outlet structure of Whiterocks Lake Dam to a confluence with Upper Whiterocks River

Eligible: Same

Location:

	Ashley National Forest, Vernal Ranger District, Duchesne and Uintah Counties, Utah		Congressional District UT -2	
	Start (TRS)	End (TRS)	Classification	Miles
Upper Whiterocks	SE ¼ NE ¼ Sect. 32, T 5 N, R 1 W, USM	SE ¼ SW ¼ Sect. 16, T 4 N, R 1 W, USM	Scenic	3.93
East Fork Whiterocks	NE ¼ NE ¼ Sect. 2, T 4 N, R 1 W, USM	SE ¼ SW ¼ Sect. 16, T 4 N, R 1 W, USM	Scenic	4.33

Physical Description of River: The watercourses cut through the broad glaciated basins of Uinta

Mountain quartzite. They pass through open meadows lined with willows, and patches of high elevation Engelmann spruce and subalpine vegetation. The topography is relatively low gradient and rolling. The riparian zone of the river has a cover of grasses, forbs, shrubs, and sedges.

ELIGIBILITY

Name and Date of Eligibility Document: Final Eligibility of Wild & Scenic Rivers - Ashley National Forest USDA Forest Service July 2005

Determination of Free-flowing Condition: Dams at Whiterocks and Chepeta Lakes alter the downstream flows through these segments. There are no diversions or channel modifications in the segments themselves. During the eligibility process, the forest interdisciplinary team determined that there are sufficient flows in the watercourses throughout the year to maintain the outstandingly remarkable values.

Summary of Outstandingly Remarkable Values (ORV):

Scenic – The Upper Whiterocks river crosses through a striking landscape of basins, meadows, ridgelines and peaks. Riparian areas and meadows provide seasonal variation in color during late fall months. There is exceptional contrast in vegetative cover with the high ridges that parallel both sides of the river and tributary. The corridor offers panoramic vistas of the peaks of the High Uintas backcountry, including cirques, lakes, and small streams along the corridor length. East Fork of Whiterocks River runs through a lush riparian area of meadow vegetation for approximately half of its length. Small lakes and streams within scenic basins and meadow corridors dot the northwestern facing slopes adjacent to the river. The riparian areas, bogs, meadows and conifer stands provide seasonal variation in color throughout the year. Late spring, summer and fall flowers are found in meadow locations and the riparian vegetation changes to yellows and reds in the late fall months. This highly scenic area attracts light to moderate hunting and fishing pressure, with users accessing the river area from the trailhead at Chepeta Lake. Three developed trails run parallel to and cross the segment at various locations. The season of use is from late June to mid-October.

Recreation – Upper Whiterocks River corridor is part of the Chepeta Lake recreation complex and receives considerable use related to fishing, hunting, horseback riding, driving for pleasure, hiking, and dispersed camping. Hundreds of visitors come to this area to participate in these activities, usually spending one to two nights in dispersed camping sites. The season of use is from late June to mid-October. The surrounding area also receives some snowmobile use during winter months, with users accessing the area from the road to Paradise Park Reservoir.

CLASSIFICATION

Basis for the Classification of River: Both rivers are classified as Scenic.

Forest Development Road 110 crosses the upper end of the Upper Whiterocks just below the dam at Chepeta Lake. Trailhead parking, trails, a road bridge and rip-rapping, and outlet facilities for the dam are located at or near this crossing. The East Fork Whiterocks is accessible in places by road.

SUITABILITY REPORT

Landownership and Land Uses – Both segments are located entirely on the Ashley National Forest, Vernal Ranger District.

Upper Whiterocks		
River Mile	Ownership	Acres
0 – 3.93	Ashley National Forest	1257.6
East Fork Whiterocks		
River Mile	Ownership	Acres
0 – 4.33	Ashley National Forest	1385.6

In Duchesne County, which includes a portion of East Fork Whiterocks and all of Upper Whiterocks, National Forest System Lands are zoned as A-10, agricultural 10 acre minimum lot size. Purposes related to Forest management in this zone include the protection of the economic base of the county for such uses as forestry, oil and gas drilling, pipelines, petroleum storage and distribution and the protection of significant natural features of land, creeks, lakes, wetlands, air and the preservation of open areas for wildlife habitat, and range livestock (Zoning Ordinance 05-240).

<http://www.duchesnegov.net/planning/05240zoningordfinal.pdf>

In Uintah County, which includes a portion of East Fork Whiterocks, National Forest System Lands are zoned as RFM-Recreation, Forestry and Mining (<http://www.co.uitah.ut.us/gis/Zoning%202005.pdf>). The RFM zone has been established as a district in which the primary use of the land is for recreation, forestry, grazing, wildlife and mining purposes. In general, this zone covers the mountainous portion of the unincorporated area of the county, and is characterized by naturalistic land areas, mountains canyons, and high grazing lands interspersed by ranches, recreational camps and resorts, outdoor recreational facilities, and mines and facilities related thereto. Natural and manmade lakes are also characteristic of this zone.

Conditional land uses that are permitted only when approved by the planning commission include (Uintah County code 17.64.030):

- A. Forest product industries and buildings related thereto;
- B. Oil and gas wells, mining and processing of minerals;
- C. Gravel and rock quarries;
- D. Reservoirs, dams, power plants, electric substations, oil and gas pipelines;
- E. Hot-road-mix plants on temporary basis for not more than six months;
- F. Ski resorts, recreation camps and uses incidental to such uses;
- G. Gas stations, cafes, resorts;
- H. Radio and television transmitter facilities.

Special provisions exist for construction near waterways and flood channels. No building shall be constructed within the boundaries of any natural waterway. Where buildings are to be constructed within seventy-five (75) feet of the exterior boundaries of the high water mark of a flood channel existing at the effective date of the ordinance codified in this title, adequate measures must be taken, as determined by the board of county commissioners, to protect the building or structure from damage, due to floods, and so as not to increase the hazard to surrounding lands and buildings (Uintah County code 17.64.060)

<http://www.co.uitah.ut.us/countycode/index.html>

Mineral and Energy Resource Activities – There are no large past or currently active minerals or energy development activities, mining claims, or minerals leases located adjacent to these river segments (www.geocommunicator.gov). Based on the underlying geology, and lack of past minerals and energy development, little if any future mineral or energy extraction activities would be expected.

Water Resources Development – At the upper end of each segment, dams and outlet structures exist on Whiterocks Lake (East Fork Whiterocks) and Chepeta Lake (Upper Whiterocks). The dams are managed by the Whiterocks Irrigation Company under US Forest Service permit. These structures provide water storage and controlled releases to downstream water users. Other small dams exist on Wigwam, Papoose and Moccasin lakes, upstream of the Upper Whiterocks segment.

The Utah State Water Plan for the Uintah Basin (1999) identifies a shortage of irrigation water that generally occurs during July and August due to inadequate reservoir storage in the Uintah basin. The recommendation of this report is that storage reservoirs should be constructed on the Yellowstone River (near Altonah), Uinta River (near Neola) and Whiterocks River (near Whiterocks), as well as upper and lower Ashley Creek (Utah State Water Plan – Uintah Basin – 1999, pages 10-6 and 13-8). The report also recommends bank stabilization along Dry Fork (near Maeser). Bank stabilization, rebuilding old meander bends, and larger bridges were also recommended along Ashley Creek.

Scoping Comments from the Central Utah Water Conservancy District identified potential water development plans. Chepeta Lake and all stretches of the Whiterocks River are being examined as part of the Uinta River Basin/Green River Water Development Project. The proposed water developments are below the segments. Water developments related to Chepeta Lake are upstream of the segments. These proposed projects are not expected to alter (or be altered by) potential Wild and Scenic designation. Designation into the Wild and Scenic river system does not affect existing, valid water rights.

Transportation, Facilities, and Other Developments – Forest Development Road 110 crosses the Upper Whiterocks segment just below the dam at Chepeta Lake. Trailhead parking, trails, a road bridge and rip-rapping, and outlet facilities for the dam are located at or near this crossing. Three developed trails run parallel to and cross the East Fork Whiterocks segment at various locations.

Grazing Activities – There is no permitted use of livestock on these segments. There is a sheep allotment that is now closed.

Recreation Activities – For the Upper Whiterocks segment, recreation is described in outstandingly remarkable values above. The East Fork Whiterocks area attracts light to moderate hunting and fishing pressure, with users accessing the river area from the trailhead at Chepeta Lake.

Other Resource Activities – Timber harvest has occurred in these watersheds and could potentially occur in the future. No harvest would be expected along the river corridors.

Special Designations – The Ashley National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (1986) identifies the following management prescriptions for this area:

- (n) Range of resource uses and outputs. Commodity production modified for amenity production. Resource protection as needed outside of NRA. The riparian objective is to maintain and restore. This management prescription applies to all the Upper Whiterocks segment and the lower half of the East Fork Whiterocks segment.
- (g) Undeveloped dispersed recreation – unroaded. These areas are characterized by a variety of timbered and non-timbered lands between mid and high elevations. The riparian objective is to protect. This prescription applies to the upper half of the East Fork Whiterocks segment.

This segment is located within the Tridell/LaPoint Drinking Water Source Protection Zone, as identified by the State of Utah.

All of East Fork Whiterocks is within an inventoried roadless area. All of Upper Whiterocks (except the crossing of Forest Road 110) is within inventoried roadless areas.

Socio-Economic Environment – Some of the downstream communities in Uintah County include Whiterocks, Tridell, Lapoint, and Fort Duchesne. Vernal is the largest community in the basin with an estimated population of 7, 577 (2007 estimate). These communities are set in a picturesque rural environment, where traditional land uses such as agriculture, timber harvest and grazing have been important over time.

The economy in the Uintah Basin relies largely on agriculture, industry, traditional land uses, and tourism. Oil and gas, manufacturing, and construction are important growth industries. In recent years, oil and gas activities have increased dramatically. Oil and gas operations are evident in many areas, consisting of well sites, gathering lines and distribution sites. The Uintah and Ouray Indian Reservation lies within and adjacent to the county boundaries, which provides an important social and economic context to the Uintah Basin (<http://duchesne.net/demo/>)

The Uintah Basin has been affected by the boom and bust cycles related to the oil and gas industry over the years, but in spite of these cycles the population and economy are expected to grow. The long term outlook for the economy in the Uintah Basin is positive, with growth in oil and gas, minerals, and tourism

(http://www.water.utah.gov/planning/SWP/Unitah/swp_ub02.pdf).

Travel and tourism in the area is generally related to the abundant outdoor opportunities, including motorized and non-motorized recreation, camping, hunting, fishing, Dinosaur National Monument etc.

Current Administration and Funding Needs if Designated – The current administering agency is the USFS.

The following information is based on 2001 data, which doesn't account for inflation over the past six years, but is the best available data. If a river is designated as Wild, Scenic, or Recreational, the actual cost of preparing the comprehensive river management plan would average \$200,000 per plan for 86 segments, which would cost approximately \$17.2 million the first two to three years following designation. It was estimated that annual management costs for a high complexity river would be \$200,000; a moderate complexity river would be \$50,000; and a low complexity river at \$25,000. Using an average of complexity costs, it would cost the Forest Service around \$7.8 million annually for 86 segments. (Estimated Costs of Wild and Scenic Rivers Program - V. 091104)

SUITABILITY FACTOR ASSESSMENT:

(1) The extent to which the State or its political subdivisions might participate in the shared preservation and administration of the river, including costs, should it be proposed for inclusion in the National System.

The State of Utah has not shown interest or disinterest in the designation of these segments. Local county officials do not support Wild and Scenic designation, and would not share in the costs.

(2) The state/local government's ability to manage and protect the outstandingly remarkable values on non-federal lands. Include any local zoning and/or land use controls that appear to conflict with protection of river values.

In Duchesne County, which includes a portion of East Fork Whiterocks and all of Upper Whiterocks, National Forest System Lands are zoned as A-10, agricultural 10 acre minimum lot size. Purposes related to Forest management in this zone include the protection of the economic base of the county for such uses as forestry, oil and gas drilling, pipelines, petroleum storage and distribution and the protection of significant natural features of land, creeks, lakes, wetlands, air and the preservation of open areas for wildlife habitat, and range livestock (Zoning Ordinance 05-240).

<http://www.duchesnegov.net/planning/05240zoningordfinal.pdf>

Wild and Scenic designation would be inconsistent with the stated purposes of forestry, oil and gas drilling, pipelines, petroleum storage and distribution. Designation would be consistent with the protection of significant natural features of land, creeks, lakes, wetlands, air and the preservation of open areas for wildlife habitat.

In Uintah county, which includes a portion of East Fork Whiterocks, National Forest System Lands are zoned as RFM-Recreation, Forestry and Mining. The RFM zone has been established as a district in which the primary use of the land is for recreation, forestry, grazing, wildlife and mining purposes. Wild and Scenic designation could be inconsistent with the stated uses of forestry, and mining. Designation could also be inconsistent with conditional land uses in Uintah County, including oil and gas wells/pipelines, gravel and rock quarries, reservoirs, dams, and power plants. Designation could be consistent with the purposes of recreation, permitted grazing, and wildlife. In addition, designation would be consistent with special provisions that exist for construction near waterways and flood channels.

(3) Support or opposition to designation.

Comments received during the eligibility study

Uintah County officials, Duchesne County officials, the Uintah County Water Conservancy District, the Duchesne Water Conservancy District, and various members of the public were opposed to designation. Some reasons for opposition were potential effects to downstream water rights, potential effects to

reservoir and canal system management, potential effects to future water developments, and that other means of protecting outstandingly remarkable values are available.

The High Uintas Preservation Council, the Uinta Mountain Club, the Utah Rivers Council, and various members of the public were in support of designation. Some reasons in support of designation were the preservation of various outstandingly remarkable values, the prevention of further development or modification of river segments, the protection of river segments within inventoried roadless areas, and the protection of water quality within municipal watersheds.

Comments received during scoping for the suitability study

Letters of support were received from several individuals and non-profit organizations. All of these letters addressed the Upper and East Fork Whiterocks segments in combination with the other eligible segments of the Whiterocks river system. Values cited included the remote, undeveloped setting; the diversity of scenery, terrain and habitat types present; and the collective contribution of these segments to river system or basin integrity. One letter noted that although a short stretch of the East Fork immediately below Whiterocks Reservoir is dry at certain times of the year, small tributaries along most of the segment provide enough water to sustain year-round flows.

Letters from the Central Utah Water Conservancy District and Uintah and Duchesne Water Conservancy Districts opposed designation based on potential conflicts with operation of existing reservoirs higher in the watershed that affect downstream flow regimes, including leaving portions of each segment dry while the reservoirs fill (but see other comments above and the Forest's assessment of flow regimes under section 4(a)). They also expressed concern that designation would affect water development potential for the area. The State of Utah commented that two potential reservoir sites have been identified in this drainage, but based on the legal descriptions provided both appear to be downstream of these segments.

One comment letter requested that any portion of the Whiterocks River abutting tar sands deposits not be considered suitable. The only known tar sands deposits are near the Forest boundary, well downstream of these segments.

Comments responding to the Draft EIS

Among the organizations and individuals in favor of WSR designation there was particularly strong support for rivers highlighted in the Utah Rivers Council letter, i.e.: Whiterocks River, including the Upper, West Fork, East Fork and Middle Main sections as well as Reader Creek. Many letters commented that all segments within a single river system should be considered together, because they are ecologically connected and a joint recommendation would enhance their contribution to the river system's integrity. Common examples included: Whiterocks River, including the Upper, West Fork, East Fork and Middle Main sections as well as Reader Creek

The Ashley Creek and Whiterocks river systems provide virtually all the water used by residents in the eastern Uintah Basin. Local officials and residents expressed great concern that operation of existing facilities would be restricted, compromising water rights and affecting local economies. Rapid population growth and potential oil shale development activities were also cited as reasons to retain the option of building additional water storage and delivery systems in these systems.

Proponents of designation for Whiterocks and Ashley Creeks cited the opportunity to protect large, intact watersheds and for their scenic, recreational and wildlife values. Ashley Creek in particular spans many life zones, from alpine to cottonwood – more than any other segment or combination of segments in the study. :

A common theme was that all rivers within Wilderness or roadless areas should be designated, in part because they pose few conflicts with other uses or activities and would be relatively simple to manage. In addition to the Wilderness rivers listed above, the following rivers were recommended based on being all or mostly within roadless: South Fork Ashley Creek, Ashley Gorge, all of the Whiterocks segments, and

Lower Dry Fork (these are examples; different letters cited different examples). Of the three organized campaigns all supported a positive finding of suitability for this segment.

(4) The consistency of designation with other agency plans, programs or policies and in meeting regional objectives.

Designation would complement the existing direction in Forest management prescription areas, inventoried roadless areas, and Drinking Water Source Protection Zones for Tridell/LaPoint. Designation would also complement the joint efforts of the Ashley National Forest and the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources to restore a meta-population of native Colorado Cutthroat trout in the Whiterocks drainage.

As discussed in suitability factor (2), designation could be both inconsistent and consistent with Duchesne and Uintah County zoning ordinances. Relevant portions of the County General Plans and Public Lands Policies are summarized as follows:

Uintah County

Uintah County's General Plan (2005 draft, obtained from the County web site) states that water quality and availability are necessary for continued growth and development, and contains policies to promote efficient management and use of water resources. With respect to Wild and Scenic River designation, the County's Public Lands Policy provides the following position statements:

- Special designations, such as wilderness, Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC), wild and scenic rivers, critical habitat, semi primitive and non-motorized travel, etc., result in single purpose or non-use and are detrimental to the area economy, life styles, culture, and heritage.
- Needed protections can be provided by well planned and managed development.
- No special designations should be proposed until it is determined and substantiated by verified scientific data, that there is a need for the designation, that protections can not be provided by other methods, and the area in question is truly unique when compared to other area lands.
- Designations must be made in accordance with the spirit and direction of the acts and regulations that created them.
- Designations that are not properly planned or managed are inconsistent with the mandates that public lands be managed for multiple use and sustained yield.

Uintah County also has a Public Lands Implementation Plan. It contains the following direction related to Wild and Scenic Rivers:

- WSR classifications must be appropriate and reflect the existing conditions and uses of bordering lands and the definitions contained in Sec. 2(b)(1)(2)(3) of the Act.
- The County must be provided an opportunity to participate in the preservation and/or administration of any river proposed or designated in the WSR system (Sec. 5(c) of the Act). Such designations must be provided for protections of water rights and access to water contained in that right. No WSA [*sic*] may be designated that have the effect of reducing water rights or access to those rights.
- Boundaries or buffers for designated water courses shall not exceed 320 acres/mile measured from the ordinary high water mark [Sec. 3(b)] and 1/4 mile from the ordinary high water mark on each side of the river [Sec. 4(d), Sec. 8(b), Sec. 9(a)(iii)].
- In addition to the boundary limitation provided in the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, Congress and the Department of Interior have found these limitations to be adequate on sections of the lower Green River where protection of scenic value was requested by them [Cooperative Government to Government Agreement Concerning Transfer of Naval Oil Shale Reserve Number 2, Public Law 106-398 Sec. 3405 (2)(c)].
- Any protection applied to streams or rivers must provide that such protections will in no

manner affect, impair, or limit the ability of holders of water rights to utilize their water rights. This is consistent with Department of Interior and congressional actions where similar protections were requested by them. [Cooperative Government to Government Agreement Concerning Transfer of Naval Oil Shale Reserve Number 2, Public Law 106-398 Sec. 3405 (2)(c)].

Duchesne County

The Duchesne County General Plan states that special designations, including wild and scenic rivers, “may result in non-use, restricted use, or environmental impacts on public and private lands. Special designations dictate practices that restrict access or use of the land that impact other resources or their use. Such designations cause resource waste, serious impacts to other important resources and actions, and are inconsistent with the principles of multiple use and sustained yield.” The County’s position is that:

- The objectives of special designations can be met by well-planned and managed development of natural resources.
- No special designations shall be proposed until the need has been determined and substantiated by verifiable scientific data available to the public. Furthermore, it must be demonstrated that protection cannot be provided by other means and that the area in question is truly unique compared to other area lands.
- Special designations can be detrimental to the County’s economy, life style, culture, and heritage. Therefore special designations must be made in accordance with the spirit and direction of the laws and regulations that created them.

With respect to Wild and Scenic Rivers, County support will be withheld until:

- It is clearly demonstrated that water is present and flowing at all times;
- It is clearly demonstrated that the required water-related value is considered outstandingly remarkable within a region of comparison consisting of one of the three physiographic provinces in the state. The rationale and justification for the conclusions shall be disclosed;
- The effects of the addition on the local and state economies, private property rights, agricultural and industrial operations and interests, tourism, water rights, water quality, water resource planning, and access to and across river corridors in both upstream and downstream directions from the proposed river segment have been evaluated in detail by the relevant federal agency;
- It is clearly demonstrated that the provisions and terms of the process for review of potential additions have been applied in a consistent manner by all federal agencies; and
- The rationale and justification for the proposed addition, including a comparison with protections offered by other management tools, is clearly analyzed within the multiple-use mandate, and the results disclosed. All valid existing rights, including grazing leases and permits shall not be affected.

(5) Contribution to river system or basin integrity.

The proposed segments include a large portion of these watersheds, except for the headwater areas above the reservoirs, which were not found eligible. The downstream watershed and basin integrity could be improved by considering the additional segments in this watershed together, including Upper Whiterocks, East Fork Whiterocks, Middle Whiterocks, and West Fork Whiterocks.

These segments are entirely on National Forest System Lands, so the current proposal could not be expanded to other jurisdictions or ownerships.

(6) Demonstrated or potential commitment for public volunteers, partnerships, and/or stewardship commitments for management and/or funding of the river segment.

There has not been a demonstrated interest or disinterest in public volunteers, partnerships or stewardship commitments.